

**Sexual content warning.**

**Read - Pray**

**Intro - Open to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Oral arguments were held for the supreme court case, Obergefell vs. Hodges. The issue was same-sex marriage or specifically about homosexuals in Ohio suing the department of Health for the invented right to be issued a marriage license. On this day in April, Justice Samuel Alito asked the then Solicitor General Donald Verilli Jr., "In the Bob Jones case, the court held that a college was not entitled to tax exempt status if it opposed interracial marriage or interracial dating. So would the same apply to a university or a college if it opposed same-sex marriage?" Verrilli replied that he would need to know more specifics, but allowed that "it's certainly going to be an issue. I don't deny that."

"It's certainly going to be an issue." From the beginning of the crusade for same-sex marriage, the goal has been state coercion (through taxes or outright legislative ban) of the sexual revolution on churches and individual Christians. They have managed to get American culture to move from seeing it as clearly wrong, to tolerated, to celebrated, and the end result of punishing those who do not celebrate. Alito was asking about private universities and taxation, but it will not stop there. They will not stop.

This morning Pastor Craig taught that those who abide in Christ will be hated by the world because they first hated Him. And the clearest example of where this is headed is the world's hatred of God's truth of biblical sexuality. They hate his words and deeds and so they will hate ours.

But make no mistake, we do not teach God's words to be confrontational. We teach the truth that will set men free from bondage to sin and death. The world hates the truth and as we saw last week in Romans 1, that the world exchanges the truth for a lie and suppresses the truth in unrighteousness.

The Abiders want to offer, Christians and non-Christians alike, the better hope that they are not to reap the consequences of sexual deviance. The Bible offers answers the world cannot. We have a better hope to offer people than mere affirmation. We have a category for God's kingdom, for real evil, and true conversion.

So, let's look at those: God's Kingdom, Real Evil, and True Conversion.

**One – God's Kingdom**

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9a

**<sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?**

The Corinthian Church is a church Paul spent a lot of time with and sent lots of letters to. We only have two out of four here in our Bibles. Of the letters we know of, this is number 2 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians is number 4. He wrote more to them than anyone else. Paul was very familiar with their past sins and their current struggles. A member of this church, Chloe, had written to Paul concerning their blatant disregard for holiness. Sexual purity in particular, is the topic of these middle chapters of the letter. Chapters 5 through 7 all have connections to sexual purity in one form or another. In Chapter 5, Paul has harsh words for a man doing the unthinkable, having incestuous intercourse with his step-mother. In chapter 6, their public lawsuits against one another, are seen to the unbelievers of the city. Paul wants them to see that to be publicly sinning sexually or in the courts is against their nature. Because now, they are born-again Christians who belong to Christ. This theme of belonging to the Lord, to Christ, is an important lesson to learn for all Christians for all time, especially when it comes to our sexual lives. As Pastor Craig says, "God owns you". This is the foundational truth that our culture is trying to deny in sexual immorality. To define and act out sexually as we please, sets ourselves as the highest authority. Instead, Paul calls us to see that either you reject the creator and his plans for your life, or you receive him as your savior and repent of your sin.

So, Paul's rhetorical question to start this section, assumes that since they are born again, they know this to be true. The unrighteous, the ones they are acting like (by allowing incest in the church and dragging each other into court), will not inherit the kingdom of God. The same Kingdom that was the center of Jesus' preaching and ministry of earth from the very beginning. The first message after his baptism and temptation by Satan are found in Matthew 4:17, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"

Instead of behaving like they have repented and are in the kingdom, they are acting like they used to be before they became a part of the kingdom of God. This leads Paul to remind them of what people are like outside the kingdom of God. What they were like in their old way of living. As we see, this is not mudslinging at nonbelievers, this is a call to believers to see that they used to live in real evil. Real Evil hasn't changed.

## Two – Real Evil

Read 1 Corinthians 9b-10

Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

Notice that Paul is warning of deception. This is the nature of acts against God, and by those who are not of God. There is nothing neutral in this world. It is either of the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Sin, Satan and Evil. Satan, the great deceiver wants God's people to neglect the joy of their salvation and live in the death they have left. Paul lists the people, and the sinful actions or identities they take on, to show that they have given into deception. I want to take each of the terms that focus on sexual sin and trace them to the root so you can understand what Paul is fully saying. I will use some Greek terms which I won't do often but I need you to see that there is deep scholarship and real definitions to Paul's words here.

More importantly I need you to be convinced of the authority of the scriptures over our lives. If scripture speaks to it, it speaks with authority. This is true because in the scriptures God speaks and there is no greater authority than the Almighty King over heaven and earth. Let us look at the words our King has spoken.

Fornicators – the Greek is Πορνεία, and it is also translated as sexually immoral people. It's of course easy to see its where we get the word pornography. It is a broad term for sexual immorality and Paul uses it 13x in this letter which speaks to how prevalent and dangerous it was to this church and to ours. How easy it is for us to be sexually immoral. The Corinthians had a particular problem with prostitution, and Paul expands and explains in the next section of the letter how Christians should not be joined to a prostitute in particular. So broad or narrow, those who have sex outside of marriage, God's design for sex, is the general meaning here.

Idolatry comes next, but it seems to me that it is placed here amongst a list of sexual sins to highlight the next in the list.

Adulterers – In the Greek Μοιχος, which is narrower in usage so it does simply mean adulterer. It is the person who is married and has sex with someone else. It is a betrayal.

This is where it connects to idolatry because God's people, the nation of Israel has acted and been named time and time again as an adulteress. They run after other Gods, cheating on their creator God, YHWH. Betraying his love. So as the church of Corinth would be tempted to cheat on their wives, they are reminded that this is what idolaters do. It is not a mere physical act, it is a spiritual betrayal to God himself, as you cheat on the covenant you made with your spouse and God to be true and pure. As Hebrews 13:4 says, **“let the marriage bed be undefiled”**. Adulterers defile what God has declared good and pure.

Effeminate – depending on your translation, these next two categories could be combined as one phrase. Either “males who have sex with males”, or “men who practice homosexuality”. Neither get to the underlying Greek which has two words here. The first, translated in the NASB as Effeminate, is Μαλακοι in the Greek. This word literally is the adjective "soft" and was used descriptively in Luke 7:25 to refer to "soft" robes. It also has a second use referring to effeminate males or in the context of this passage of sexual immorality, it describes the passive partners in the homosexual act. As we discussed last week, in Deut. 23:1, for a man to reject his masculinity and trade it, for femininity is to sin against God. In the context of 1 Corinthians 6:9, despite its connection to male prostitutes, it is clearly referring to homosexuality when used in connection with arsenokoitai, our next word which means "male intercourse" or the active male homosexual partner.

Homosexuals – in the Greek Αρσενοκοιται. Paul invents this compound word of "male" and "bed" (“to take to bed” a euphemism for intercourse) and specifically refers to the active partner in male homosexual intercourse. This word appears first in ancient writing here in 1 Corinthians 6:9 but refers to the Old Testament (translated into Greek in the Septuagint) in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 which uses the word arsen for male instead of the general Greek term for male. This link to Leviticus shows Paul's intention to establish Levitical sexual ethics in his condemnation of homosexual intercourse by either the passive or active partner.

Revisionist pastors and theologians, those who seek to undermine the biblical truth, generally try to attack Paul's meaning in this passage in two ways. First, they claim that Paul was not condemning loving adults, but was condemning coercive pederasty (when an older man has intercourse with a boy). This is not the clear reading of the text. The terms malakoi and arsenokoitai when used together show that this list of sinful acts includes a male taking the female role in intercourse, not coerced.

It's not conditioned to weaken its understanding to only pederasty or prostitution. Paul could have used the Greek word for such acts paiderastes or paidofiles. Or if he was going to invent a word for men having sex with boys, he could have used a word meaning "boy-bed" because arsenokoitai is related to terms like "douloskoites" "slave-bed" or "metrokoites" "mother-bed". Instead, he uses Levitical, or Old Testament terms about men having intercourse with other men. This solidifies to 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians, many of whom were former Jews, that God's prohibitions against all types of sexual immorality is connected to the law, a law fulfilled not abolished by Christ.

Second, they claim that Paul didn't know about loving committed homosexual marriage as we know today. He only knew of promiscuous or uncommitted homosexuals. On this topic, Craig A. Williams, author of Roman Homosexuality, concludes as follows: *"In sum, it seems clear that some Romans did participate in formal wedding ceremonies in which one male was married to another ... and that these men considered themselves joined as spouses."* You can also go back to Romans 1 which we discussed last week and see that in verse 27, they **"burned in their desire toward one another"** The word here for desire is stressed by **"one another"** to show that it is in fact reciprocal affection, not coercive or promiscuous actions. Then Paul speaks the same condemnation on lesbian sex which is well-known in antiquity not as exploitation but as mutual relations between adult women. For these reasons, despite revisionist attempts, many secular scholars and even liberal scholars agree that Paul knew about and condemned what we see today in homosexual relationships, but they hold to its rightness in defiance of Paul. It's just simply not possible to read the Old or New Testament and come to the conclusions that so called "same-sex marriage" or attraction or identity could be seen as positive or holy or approved by God.

This leads us to where I have been longing to get to: True Conversion.

### Three – True Conversion

Read 1 Corinthians 6:11

**<sup>11</sup> Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.**

One of my favorite phrases to remind myself and believers is this one right here. "Such were some of you." It is a great protection against pride, or self-righteousness, or inaction, or condemnation. The gospel is the great equalizer in that no sin is worse than another, but unrepentant and continual sin will be your death no matter what it is.

Now catch the repetition of the word "but". **BUT** you were washed, **but** you were sanctified, **but** you were justified. In opposition to your old life. You are now righteous not unrighteous.

I have confidence that to declare these truths tonight is good news. What God has done in the name, in the authority, in the work of Christ's death for your sins has and does rescue us from the worst of sexual sin and death. The Corinthian church had former, yes former, adulterers and homosexuals. Paul in this letter, tells the church to put out members who continue to practice and do not repent of continued sexual sin. The church in every time and place is only people who once were lost but now are found. Were dead but are now alive.

We should not expect that everyone who comes to Christ will be utterly rescued from all sexual temptation. Any married man or woman can say that wedding vows don't keep you from sexual immorality. Bold proclamations that you will never do XYZ will not keep you from sin. It is commitment to the covenant of marriage and to God's sanctifying work that keeps you from adultery. It is God's grace to work in you the fruit of your abiding in Christ that will keep you, by his power, from relapsing into unrepentant sin. True conversion, which Paul was reminding the Corinthians of, will show:

- 1) True conviction of sin
- 2) A new nature (you now hate your sin)
- 3) You are described as washed, sanctified, justified

This means that you leave behind who you once were. There are no drunkard Christians, thieving Christians, no fornicating Christians, no adulterer Christians and against the culture and compromising churches no trans or gay Christians.

You are washed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You carry the name of Christ, Christian, and nothing else. We preach Christ and him crucified for the sins we once lived in. No sin should define us now. In the Spirit of our God, you are new, not old.

This claim to Christ-like living will require endurance, it will require crucifixion of your fleshly desires, and it will likely require persecution. So, we must cling, not to our affections, not to our sense of the truth, but the objective standard of truth the word of God. This world will offer you the perception of strength like a blade of grass, it will offer you the appearance of beauty. But the grass withers, the flowers fade but the word of our God stands forever!

## **Conclusion**

I hope that this hasn't just been a flurry of Greek terms and technical language but a vision for the stark contrast between a life in the world and a life in the Kingdom of God. If you are not a Christian, our hope for you is not to just stop being sexually immoral. It's deeper than that. Paul said in Chapter 5 that God will judge those outside of the church. So our invitation is to become the washed and purified bride of Christ. Join us in this vision of no more sin and shame, but life to the full according to God's loving plan. Turn for the first time to trust in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

If you are a Christian, hold up the scriptures like a mirror to your life. It is the authority and standard of how you are to live and shows you Christ, who you are to come to become like. If you are impure, if you are lost in your past life, trust in Christ and his power to cleanse you and set you on the path of righteousness. If you are walking in purity today, rejoice and be humble and vigilant because you must endure in this new life you have been given. You are a part of God's kingdom, free from real evil, and living out your true conversion!